

A
Guide to the Stage :

O R,

Select Instructions and Precedents

F R O M

The BEST AUTHORITIES

TOWARDS FORMING

A POLITE AUDIENCE;

With some ACCOUNT of

The *PLAYERS*, &c.

*Ponere signa novis præceptis, qualia vincant
Pythagoram, Anytique reum, doctumque Platona.*

HOR.

L O N D O N :

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A

Guide to the Stage, &c.

A Real concern for the mistakes of others, not an ambition to dictate, is the motive of my attempting to lay down some rules and directions for the conduct of those who frequent the playhouse. For want of something of this nature, how many improprieties have crept into the theatre? Notwithstanding the example of several polite persons of both sexes, we daily see and hear injudicious applause, laborious attention, rustic laughter, inelegant tears, with other errors, no less gross than obvious.

There are even some who wilfully forget themselves, see and hear Romeo and Hamlet in person, are at Denmark or Mantua, without once dreaming of Drury-Lane or Garrick. These, I fear, I must abandon to their own indiscretion, and direct my discourse to the young and unexperienc'd, who err thro' ignorance or inadvertency; yet are ready and willing to imitate their example, whose taste and

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deportment

deportment are allow'd to be the most refin'd. Not that it is to be suppos'd any rules can be given, whereby the most promising genius will at first appear at the theatre with that composure of mind, that freedom and ease of behaviour, so visible in the well-bred part of an audience: this must be the work of time and practice. If therefore I discover the principal excellencies of a polite audience, and point out the obstacles to the arriving at such excellencies, with other occasional discoveries, I flatter myself I shall have perform'd all that can be expected from me, and answer'd my reader's expectations as fully as the time and bounds I have allow'd myself will admit.

I am not sensible that any thing of this kind has hitherto been offer'd to the publick, and therefore find a singular pleasure in giving the first sketch or outlines of a work; which, from the superior merit of it's design, may induce abler hands to give the finishing stroke to. I then boldly enter the lists, as the first champion for theatric decorum; and this the more willingly, to make some attonement for my former misdemeanor. Bays and Falstaff have kept me in a constant laugh; even Scrub himself, as much a scrub as he is, has forc'd a smile from me. Cato has wound me up to the highest pitch of patriotism; not a word from Hamlet has escap'd my attention, and I have oftener us'd my handkerchief than the
heroine

heroine of the play: nay, so far had my misfortune work'd itself into a habit, that to this day I am reckon'd bad company during the most pathetic scenes of a tragedy. Nor did I confine my errors to the stage only; I publicly maintain'd them, and have warmly insisted that in order to see a play with pleasure and advantage, we ought to have an eye to the persons, places and times represented, or that otherwise many passages in our best dramatic writers must appear absurd. I had also an aversion to every thing that interrupted the series of a play, as dances and songs between the acts, &c. which I treated with the epithets of childish, ridiculous, and impertinent. I have been the more particular in recounting my own misconduct, in order to encourage those who may labour under the like misfortunes not to despair of a cure, and that it may be presum'd I shall from a fellow-feeling treat the subject with great candour.

As I design these remarks for universal benefit, I am something dubious how to behave with regard to the difference of age and sex; there being some liberties allowable to the fair, which the other sex may not assume, and grave sixty must not usurp the spirit of gay twenty-one: yet, should I give separate instructions, I fear many of my readers will content themselves with perusing such places only, as will be more particularly adapted to their respective

tive circumstances, and thereby deprive themselves of the means they may get to become able judges of the merit of others. Another reason is, that I find the greater part of my directions will be common to every age and sex.

From these motives I believe I shall make but little distinction; tho' by way of an equivalent, I shall, in the course of this work, introduce occasionally some of the leading persons of both sexes. I therefore take the present opportunity to admonish Mr. Afterday to relinquish his cat-call to his nephew, who is a youth of a very promising aspect, and will employ it with greater propriety. I also advise Mr. Meanwell to forbear that unnecessary application of his handkerchief at a tragedy. This I know he does in compliance to the custom of the tender hearted Belinda; but I hope he will readily refrain, when I assure him that his behaviour has gain'd him no esteem in the fair one's opinion.

I shall add nothing more by way of preface, than earnestly to recommend my readers (especially such as are conscious of any imperfection) to carry this essay with them to the theatre; wherein I can promise them they will be countenanc'd by some of the choice spirits of the age, who have assur'd me they will readily set the example, and whose previous approbation of the doctrine contain'd in these pages I
judg'd

judg'd necessary, and can acquaint my readers I have had the good success to obtain.

Before we make our appearance at the stage, it will be necessary to say something of the choice of houses and plays. I do not find any person of note, who is so attach'd to either house, as not to frequent the other; still there is a necessity to have a greater propensity to one. I need not mention that this propensity is founded on a regard for some favourite player, whom we must be careful to distinguish by a clap at first appearance. If any of my readers are undetermin'd in their choice, I shall not pretend to lay down rules for inclination. I must not at the same time omit taking notice, that this regard generally attends those of some distinguish'd merit, tho' Mercutio himself is not without his admirers. Whenever therefore any dispute or contest happens between the houses, we must muster up all our forces to support the interest and dignity of the favourite house. Not to mention the transports of a triumph, when we prove victorious, we thereby raise an emulation between the contending parties, which always terminates in the improvement of both. New scenes, dances, decorations, &c. owe their birth to this: to this we are indebted that England has been search'd to furnish us with an infant piper, and Turkey has gratified us with a rope-dancer; and I don't question but we shall owe to this a
fight

sight of something yet more entertaining on one of our theatres. A particular encouragement of either of the playhouses must not therefore be stigmatiz'd with the title of party or faction; nor ought it to be insinuated, that any manager or player is able to lead the town into whatever caprice he may think proper. They must be utterly ignorant of the maxims and practice of the present age, who can possibly suppose it.

Thus having shewn the advantages of giving the preference to one of the theatres, and pointed out the time when such preference is to be given, it now remains to direct our conduct when the favourite house does not demand our assistance. Is there an occasional prologue to be spoken? Have we imported a new dance from the French opera? Let the play be what it will, we must not let slip such opportunities, nor question the elegance of an entertainment, which the manager has judg'd proper: for he whose labour and study are dedicated to the service of the publick, must indisputably be allow'd the ablest judge of what will suit the taste and genius of his auditory. In a word, we must croud to that house, which promises us any thing that has the air of novelty. A royal command for a play seems also, in some manner, to command a crouded audience. This I always thought so obvious, that I had not mention'd it, but for
the

the late misfortune of the unhappy Felidia. Felidia, whose passion for her much admir'd Hamlet, devotes her entirely to his service, no sooner understood a play was by princely authority commanded at the other house, than she took it for a flag of defiance, and engag'd a numerous acquaintance to accompany her to Drury-Lane, at the head of whom she doubted not to out-rival the splendor of her enemy's audience. Elate with the hopes of success, she prepar'd with great alacrity for the combat. But see how little we ought to rely on human projects! The unfortunate Felidia, notwithstanding her reluctance, was hurried away to Covent-Garden by those very persons, who had promis'd to second her intended favour to the other house; and it was not without concern, that I beheld her as a fair captive, who was involuntarily dragg'd along to adorn the triumph of a haughty enemy. To stop a current is a task too difficult for one to undertake: we must prudently give way to a general resolution, and wait for more favourable opportunities to exert our opposition.

If none of the foregoing motives direct us in the choice of a play, I must then without hesitation determine in favour of tragedy. I could alledge many reasons for preferring it to comedy, but shall content myself with that of the noted Frank Gayly, whose judicious taste of dramatic performance gives a sanction to his opinion.

opinion. Frank gives his verdict for tragedy, because it seldom descends into what is low; a word which he insists is never applicable to the actions of princes and heroes.

If my male readers do not closely attend me at this critical juncture, I shall for ever abandon them: I am going to introduce the ladies into the theatre, whom I beg leave to usher with all possible delicacy into the side-boxes; unless perhaps they take a fancy to pass away the time *en deshabillé* in a green-box. If any, for the sake of humour, have a mind to bludgeon it into the first gallery, they are at liberty. I can ascribe it to nothing else than this passion for humour, that several sprightly youths prefer this last place to the pit, which indeed seems to have been strangely neglected of late; and tho' it still continues to be the scene of action during the first nights of a new play, it comes even then far short of its pristine vigour. Should the present practice continue, we may in time descend to the pit in quest of that diversion, which is sought for above. If I can dispose of my company elsewhere, I shall have nothing to say to the front-boxes: they have been ceded by custom immemorial to the citizens, and their allies, the insipid and melancholly. I know 'tis alledg'd in their defence, that they see what passes on the stage to a greater advantage. I am ready to own, that no part of what is represented escapes them; but

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dy,
; a I would fain know whether their situation does
to not expose them to an attention little less than
flavish, and not altogether so agreeable in a
me free people?

an- But I return to those who aim to shine in a
dies side-box: let me recommend it to them above
her all things to be upon their guard at the time
res; of entering, and to behave with that freedom
way and seeming indifference, as not to appear in
If the least dazzled at the most brilliant assem-
to bly; for, unless a new prologue demands it, I
erty. shall not hand in my company 'till the curtain
bas- is drawn.

ths How I pity the blooming Sylvia, who is
eed half an hour at a play, before she can distin-
te; guish an acquaintance but three boxes from
of her! Sylvia, adorn'd with every female charm,
it is but too apt to be dash'd at the universal
our. gaze and loud whispers which her appearance
may occasion, and which she looks upon as a mis-
di- fortune, not a tribute paid to her unrival'd
can beauty. I must caution my readers of both
ave sexes against such a weakness; and let me as-
ave sure them, that nothing will contribute more
iti- to their entering with due decorum, than to
an- persuade themselves they cannot meet with an
ce, equal. Thus, from a self-conviction of their
o a superior merit, they will regard the rest of the
no audience as their inferiors, and make their en-
out try as to a publick triumph. This will en-
uld able them to take their seats with a becoming

C

grace,

grace, and salute their acquaintance with great ease and dignity.

I know no person that possesses the foregoing qualifications in a more eminent degree, than the celebrated lady Betty Tippet. She has indeed the advantage of having been introduced very early at the theatre, where the child made such witty remarks, as sufficiently foretold what she was capable of arriving to. Lady Betty is all for tragedy, and Othello is her favourite player; because, to use her own words, "He generally speaks such honourable sentiments, and seems to have such tender sensations." She often bespeaks a box for a month beforehand, against a favourite play; and, tho' she has undoubted intelligence of what is perform'd, will ask the box-keeper very calmly what play is acted that night. Self-approbation is so visibly painted in her countenance, that when she enters you can easily perceive she receives the bows and salutes of her acquaintance as a homage due to her: at the same time she condescends to return the civility with great cheerfulness, yet so as to let the audience see she is conscious of her own pre-eminence. From a general knowledge of the plays in vogue, the most admir'd parts of which she repeats with very little alteration, lady Betty has the advantage to know when any thing of consequence is to be acted. Thus she will shudder at the enterance of the

Ghost

eat Ghost in Hamlet, and turn pale during the enchantment in Macbeth ; tho', by the rules of opticks the performers are three yards out of her sight. But lady Betty has a lively imagination ; which, added to her extensive knowledge, enables her to partake of what is represented, tho' her situation may seem to imply the contrary.

But the players have begun : let us see if what they are about deserves our attention. To know this, we must have a previous acquaintance with the plays themselves ; for the best of them are allow'd to have but few passages worth our notice. To point out such passages would exceed the bounds I have set myself, and be altogether unnecessary for those who have a natural genius for the beauty of the Drama, for whom I principally design my labours. Such, upon perusing a play, will readily discover the places, where an actor is to exert his abilities. If any are diffident of their own taste, I can only recommend to them a careful observation of the behaviour of others. But what is to be done, when nothing worth our attention passes on the stage ? If gallantry, mode, dress, scandal, the grotesque figure of some, and absurd behaviour of others, with a thousand other occasional subjects for wit and mirth, cannot furnish sufficient entertainment, I am at a loss what to prescribe. And here let me silence the clamour of those, who ex-
claim

claim against conversation during the recital of a play. Can they possibly imagine, that the languid issue of cold Hippocrene is equal to the spirit and vigour of Burgundy? or that a garret is productive of more wit than a drawing-room?

A previous knowledge of plays will also serve to direct us when to time our applause; which I am not willing to encourage but on very singular occasions, and when the player appears in some extraordinary attitude. Thus whatever deserves our notice, is generally entitled to our approbation: I say generally, for such parts sometimes come under the management of an actor of unestablished reputation, to applaud whom may perhaps be imprudent, and expose us to the mortification of being seconded by none but the upper gallery. I think it therefore best to confine our approbation to the leading players, who will themselves give the signal when they are to be applauded: a secret but little known, and which I shall discover for the benefit of my readers. On these occasions Cato looks more than usually big, Hamlet stares with great emphasis, Othello has a most languishing aspect, Monimia is all sighs and softness, Beatrice will bridle, and pretty Peggy Wildair leers you into a clap.

From what has been said I think it must follow of course, that the merit of a performance

of mance is to be ascrib'd more to the player than to the author. If any question the truth of this, let them go to the rehearsal of a new play; where they will find, that the actors of the last class claim a right to alter or expunge whatever they disapprove of in their respective parts; a privilege that the author always submits to, no doubt from a conviction of their superior talents.

The next thing to be consider'd is disapprobation, which I think may be sufficiently shewn, by an attention to something else, by loud discourse, profuse laughter, and the like. I cannot help thinking it a little out of character, for a polite audience to distort their features by a hiss: however for the sake of some ambitious youths, who thus I love to signalize themselves, I shall leave a new play to their mercy. Then they are at liberty to exercise their several talents, whether they hiss or groan most successfully, or have a greater genius for the cat-call. If you desire to know when you are to shew your dislike, my answer is, when any thing displeases you, or in fine when you will, provided you have a strong party to second you; for the best hiss or groan in the universe, may be drown'd in a general applause.

What I meant by rustic laughter, at the beginning of this essay, was laughter at the jests

jest of a comedy, which I cannot approve of. If we consider these jests as the effects of labour and study, which they really are, I can hardly see how they can afford us matter of diversion: for wit loses its vivacity and spirit when it is not extempore; which I believe is one very material reason, why a masquerade is so universally prefer'd to a play. Must then laughter be totally excluded from the theatres? I have already hinted the contrary. I shall allow my pupils to laugh as much as they please, provided they are upon their guard, not to laugh at what passes on the stage; unless it be an impropriety, a blunder, or some ridiculous accident.

To refrain from laughter is, in my opinion, much easier than to command our tears; which however must be done, or we tarnish the lustre of every other embellishment: the most I can allow the fair sex is a gentle sigh, and that at some very pathetic speech. And pray are there no other means left us than our tears, to express an approbation of well-painted distress? Must we then realize the sufferings of Lear, or look upon the anguish of Andromache to be any other than imaginary? I cannot help being of opinion, that lady Betty Tippet's calm, "That is very moving", is a greater encomium of the performance, than the sobs of a whole audience.

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If any of my readers find themselves liable to be melted into an unseemly tenderness, I must recommend to them a frequent perusal of those passages, which are apt to betray them into such a weakness. Custom is no less prevailing than nature. I wou'd also advise them to be engag'd in some little amusement, during the representation of a moving scene; such as conversation, attention to the behaviour of others, and the like. If these methods diligently pursued, do not enable them to view the deepest tragedy with a proper serenity, I must pronounce them altogether incorrigible.

Some perhaps will be peevish enough to say, that by the drift of my discourse, I aim at rooting out the passions. Far from it. As I must allow him an able pleader, whatever his success may be, who has alledg'd sound and probable reasons in defence of his cause; so is he to be esteem'd a perfect actor, who has used the most natural means to surprize my passions. To elude his attempts, is what I shall continue to do, until I am convinc'd there is a real pleasure in being fluctuated by the tumultuous alternatives of joy and sorrow, fear and hope, love and hatred; or that I cannot enter into the spirit of the performance, unless I adopt the mock passions of the performer.

To

To convince my readers I have advanced nothing in the foregoing, but what is consonant to the rules of true decorum, I shall beg leave to quote the example of Frank Gayley, whose authority I have elsewhere appeal'd to. I know no one who has a greater presence of mind at the theatre than Mr. Gayley, in which light only I shall consider him, tho' he is possess'd of a thousand other shining qualities, which have deservedly procur'd him the reputation of one of the choice spirits of the age. Frank quitted the university and dependance on a father much about the same time, to enjoy the pleasures of the town; where he soon distinguish'd himself, no less by his taste than his fortune. He had heard that laughter was a sign of ignorance, a weakness he was never known to betray. His complexion had so much of the bold Briton in it, that from the first he appear'd (especially at a comedy) with great spirit and freedom. If any thing you could find fault with, it was his being a little too sparing of his bow: nay, to this day he seldom salutes an acquaintance, without having first level'd his glass at him for greater certainty. A tender stroke in a tragedy, has indeed sometimes unman'd him, and an involuntary tear has bedew'd his cheek; but Frank, true hero like, was resolv'd to conquer himself. He had recourse to his snuff-
box

anced box, wou'd aim to hum over a tune, or play
 con- with his sword knot, but still with little satis-
 shall faction; which however he found at last in
 rank turning his back on the stage, a posture that
 where many have found great advantage in. The
 has a fire of his youth has lead him to head a party,
 than at little theatrical skirmishes; and once or
 con- twice he drew his sword in the pit, with great
 usand success. 'Tis true it was only with a design
 vedly to frighten the boxes; yet of late he has re-
 the fus'd to make a party at such diversion; al-
 the ledging for his excuse, that half the ladies in
 much the house wou'd be vain enough to think he
 es of drew on their account. Notwithstanding this,
 him- no man alive has a greater veneration for the
 He sex: he is what you may call the knight-
 f ig- errant of the stage, and is generally the first
 n to to cherish a solitary damiel in the green
 f the boxes. Frank behaves at the theatre like the
 e ap- master of a family, who passes from room to
 great room to entertain his guests, for he seldom
 cou'd confines himself to one situation; but where-
 e too ever he is, you can easily distinguish him by
 fel- the composure of his countenance, when at-
 ving tentive to the play; if otherwise engag'd, by
 cer- the vivacity of his wit, and his singular ad-
 ha- dress in the management of his glass: for
 in- Frank is too much in the mode to distin-
 but guish any thing across the stage, with the
 con- naked eye.

I know some who insist that this defect of
 the sight is always the consequence of a defect

in the understanding, and bring authorities of the first class in support of their opinion; not to mention what they say of the word short-sighted, being indifferently us'd for either. I can never allow this to be general, tho' perhaps at a more convenient time, I may enquire how far their allegations are just: for the present I must look upon it as foreign to my subject, and return to Mr. Gayley. His great love of decorum, which he says belongs chiefly to the audience, hinders him from joining in a hiss, tho' his judicious "Damn'd stuff", often proves the signal for a general uproar. His method of applauding is very refin'd: he hardly ever vouchsafes to give a clap, but his custom is with great emphasis to repeat the passage he approves of. Upon the whole, I must allow him to be a most accomplish'd spectator; but beg leave to differ from him in some other things, wherein his notions are, I think, rather too confin'd: for, unless it be little Bel Juliet, Peggy Wildair is the only actress on the stage he allows capable of raising the passions. The action in publick he censures, with being void of life or meaning; but as he finds it more lively behind the scenes, he attributes it to a want of genius in the present writers, whom he looks upon in that respect much inferior to those of the last century.

I flatter myself that the foregoing instructions carefully attended to, and practis'd with
diligence

diligence will enable my readers to appear at the theatre with a becoming grace. If any have the ambition to soar higher, and aim at engaging the attention of the audience, I must recommend to them the rival sisters for a pattern. Mirabelle and Sylvia, for so I shall call them, shine to the greatest advantage in a green box; where, tho' they have not altogether as numerous an attendance as the father's levee, yet they can boast of being as much taken notice of at the playhouse, as he is at any other. Mirabelle and Sylvia, notwithstanding they are rivals, behave with great good breeding towards each other; for one will not make use of the same arts to draw attention, which the other has already put in practice. Thus if Sylvia by some lucky remark has engag'd her circle, Mirabelle will let fall her handkerchief into the pit, which never fails to draw the eyes of the whole audience upon her: but she does not triumph long, before her sister calls out aloud to an acquaintance in an opposite box, and becomes the object of every one's admiration; till the aspiring Mirabelle, after a seeming attention to the play, bursts out into a loud and unexpected laughter that wrests the laurel from Sylvia's brow. By these, and the like arts, I have known the ambitious fair to have been as much taken notice of as the players themselves, during the whole series of a performance.

As the playhouse is look'd upon to be productive of much gallantry, it will probably be expected I shou'd say something on that head. I do not find myself at present in the humour to prescribe any rules for the management of love-affairs ; but (what I hope will equally answer the purpose) I shall in lieu thereof give my readers the history of Phil Dangle and Clarissa ; which, with the recommendation of its being a secret, has the advantage to be founded on real facts, and is of a late date. Clarissa's passion for the play had long suggested the most probable means of getting into her good graces, and her large fortune had brought crouds of admirers to attempt it, amongst whom Mr. Dangle enlisted himself. Phil, you must know, is reckon'd to have the playhouse accent in as great perfection as any man : in this he address'd her whenever occasion offer'd, now with the raptures of Juba, another time with the language and passion of Pyrrhus ; in a word, in all the various characters of dramatic lovers. At the theatre he took care to be at her elbow to repeat the most tender lines, and wou'd often remind her that the heroines of our most admired dramatic pieces were far from being insensible to love. For all this, he thought his success much less, than what his assiduity deserv'd : to speak the truth, Clarissa saw but little in Mr. Dangle to determine her choice, more than what the rest of

of her admirers were possess'd of. Upon a
 suspicion that this might be the case, Phil
 changes his battery, and talks in a different
 strain of plot, fable, the rules of the Drama, &c.
 When he found Clarissa listen'd to this with
 great eagerness, he had nothing to do, but to
 wait patiently for an opportunity to execute
 a project he had form'd. Every thing soon
 fell out to his wish: Clarissa was at a rela-
 tion's in the country, whither Mr. Dangle had
 attended her, when a new play was given out
 to be rehears'd. Phil got private intelligence
 of its scheme and issue. Clarissa in the mean
 time was impatient to return to town; but
 Phil managed their arrival so, that they had
 hardly time to eat their dinner, before they
 were oblig'd to hurry away to the play. The
 first act was scarce finish'd, before Phil launch'd
 out into great encomiums on the author, who
 he said shew'd himself perfectly well acquainted
 with the rules of dramatic writing; and there-
 upon began with great confidence to foretel
 several proper incidents, and the most natural
 event of a number of particulars, all which
 fell out accordingly. After this need I men-
 tion his success? Clarissa cou'd no longer re-
 fuse accepting of one, who had given such
 convincing proofs of his abilities in the dra-
 matic science. She has indeed found out
 (tho' too late) that Mr. Dangle had only a
 superior art to the rest of his rivals; but from
 all her experience and observation she is now
 inclinable

inclined to think, that nature is incapable of any greater perfection.

The characters I have occasionally introduc'd I look upon to be the most effectual instructions I cou'd give, as they are of persons of undoubted taste and authority; and since I have not omitted giving other consistent directions, I hope I shall be allow'd to have penn'd as compleat a guide to the stage, as the narrow bounds I have set myself will admit of. Nor do I see the necessity there is of descending into every minute particular. If we are taught that tears are unbecoming, that laughter is not allowable on every occasion, that true decorum consists in freedom and gaiety, that we must appear unaffected at what passes on the stage, and that we must guard against too servile an attention to the play; if the most polite methods of shewing our dislike or approbation have been discover'd to us, with the arts of purchasing the admiration of an auditory, &c. I do not see what more we can desire. From a presumption therefore that I have perform'd what was expected at my hands, with regard to the play itself, I shall now say something of songs and dances. These, as they are design'd for extraordinary gratifications, I shall speak loudly in praise of; yet no longer than they have the charms of novelty to recommend them. While they have this engaging quality, I seldom fail to shew my approbation of them by an *encore*, wherein I have

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HAMLET.

have the pleasure to find myself join'd by the politest part of the audience.

What was said of dances and songs is likewise applicable to farce and pantomime; tho' farce has sometimes presented us with extraordinary characters and attitudes, which accordingly met with extraordinary success. Upon the whole, I cannot say I am a great admirer of either of these forms of amusement, a confession I had never made, had I not known it agreeable to the sentiments of numbers in great repute and esteem. If any notwithstanding take a delight in such diversions, I do not find it necessary to debar them the liberty to remain till the whole is finish'd.

But let us suppose every thing at an end: while the coaches and chairs are getting ready, we will, if you please, take a view of some of the principal players, in which I shall be as brief as possible. To avoid giving any offence, I must previously declare I shall mention them in the order they shall occur to me, without any design of preferring one to another. I shall begin with Hamlet, as he is both manager and player; tho' I have nothing to say to him in his first capacity, let others tell how well he has manag'd the town.

Hamlet, in every part he performs, has his eye stedfastly fix'd on nature, whose language he speaks with a voice truly harmonious, and a graceful gesture. From her he has copied the aspect of joy, grief, surprize and anguish;
nor

nor does he seem to think there is any entrance into the soul by paths untrod by her. Happy, did he sometimes turn an eye to himself, and examine if nature has adapted him indiscriminately for all parts.

*G-----, the darling of the fair,
For passion, gesture, voice, and air,
A mimic finish'd to a riddle-----
What pity 'tis that he's so little!*

An ingenious acquaintance of mine has projected a glass, one side of which if you examine Hamlet through, you shall find him magnified to the just size of a hero; through the other side you shall see his features properly distended for sir John Brute, or Othello, should he again attempt it.

Cato, by dint of labour and study, has learn'd to fill the stage with great dignity. His manly port and countenance speak the hero, no less than his voice and expressive action. His person, 'tis true, is the gift of nature; but the majesty and grandeur that appear in Cato, are the works of Cato himself. If you wou'd draw a paralel between Hamlet and Cato, it must be thus; that of one you say, "Such a one certainly was Cato;" while the other makes you cry out, "Such Hamlet must have been."

Othello comes next: Othello first in theatric glory, cou'd he please the judgment as much as he strikes the eye; but unhappily for Othello, we hardly think a graceful person to be sufficient attonement for unemphatic speech, and
passion

passion ill-inform'd. Othello however is in the youth of his action, which I am strongly of opinion will ripen to a proper manhood; for I suppose he is convinc'd e'er this, that the early applause he receiv'd was in consequence of what he promis'd, not what he perform'd.

Monimia, taught by nature to lay every tumultuous passion, has the skill to attack the heart in the milder forms of pity, grief, and distress. But are these ever inexpressible without the handkerchief? Must we then always veil the face of sorrow? I am apt to think that in other particulars, as well as this, Monimia relies so much on an establish'd reputation, as to neglect the most effectual arts she is mistress of to gratify her audience. Let her be upon her guard, for I see a young Juliet, who aims at nothing less than triumphing over Monimia's too great security.

Gallants, secure your hearts: enter pretty Peggy Wildair. Peggy, form'd by nature and inclinations for the softest scenes, has the misfortune of a grating voice to allay the tenderness of the impression: but Peggy is pretty, and must be allow'd an excellent actress. Peggy pays a greater attention to what passes amongst the audience, than to the subject of the play, and begins her speech as a stranger to what was said last: still Peggy is pretty, and we must allow her to act with great propriety. What I most admire in her is her aversion to hypocrisy; for Peggy scorns to affect modesty either on or off of the stage.

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But I perceive you are in a hurry to be gone : I shall dispatch the rest with all imaginable expedition. He there with the looks of Judas, and the howl of a Hyena, is Shylock, an ambitious player, who aims at reputation by out-heroding Herod. Next to him stands Iago, an able actor, had he lungs and voice to second his judgment. That bow and foppish attitude are the distinguishing marks of Mercutio, a curious buffoon : but poor Mercutio, in spite of nature and his stars, has been brought to speak upon the stage. Beatrice will hardly forgive me for introducing her amongst the crowd : to make some amends for my rudeness, I must do her the justice to own her (in spite of her person) a very agreeable actress ; but draw not too near when she is in the heat of passion, for her mouthing may perhaps disgust you. Be not alarm'd at the sight of that blazing meteor ; 'tis Lucy, a perfect mistress of every inferior character.

I can find no one amongst the remaining group, that deserves particular notice ; for the merit of the best of them is but secondary, and all we can say in their praise is, that they have tollerably well mimick'd a leading player. I therefore now with great ceremony dismiss my company, hoping they have found the performance to their liking, and wish them safe whithersoever their inclinations shall direct them.

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